

JANUARY, 1944

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THEATRE WORLD

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Edited by Frances Stephens

January, 1944

THE past year has been an astonishingly successful one for the London theatres. Rarely has it been possible to write with more enthusiasm of the achievements of twelve months, particularly bearing in mind that it is still war-time; the restrictions still many; the difficulties still unending, and the temptation to give the public less than the best accordingly always present and partly justifiable.

1943 will be remembered for some of the most brilliant revivals London has seen. To *Love for Love*, *A Month in the Country* and *Heartbreak House*, all H. M. Tennent productions, exquisitely staged and acted, must now be added the first production of Robert Donat's new regime, *An Ideal Husband*, which has set a new standard at the Westminster, already a theatre with a high tradition. Nor were there lacking a number of brand new plays of merit, contrary to the prevalent idea that managements always look for safety nowadays with only established successes. What about Priestley's *They Came to a City*; Bridie's triumph, *Mr. Bolfray*; Noel Coward's *This Happy Breed* and *Present Laughter*; Lottie Dundass and *Pink String and Sealing Wax*? In lighter vein we have had *Halfway to Heaven*, *Acacia Avenue* and the latest Ben Travers piece of nonsense, *She Follows Me About*. Then, of course, there is the new Terence Rattigan play *While the Sun Shines*, not yet visited at the time of writing.

THIS past year has also seen the return of Jack Buchanan to the West End after a far-too-long absence of six years. *It's Time to Dance* is well up to the standard of those grand Buchanan musicals of pre-war days. George Black introduced something new with *The Lisbon Story*, at the Hippodrome, and *Strike a New Note* at the Prince of Wales, and now he has reverted to variety at the Palladium after the brief brilliant visit of Irving Berlin's *This is the Army*. Jack Hylton's now well-established management gave us *Hi-de-Hi*

Over the Footlights

and *The Love Racket*, and Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge have another big success with their latest musical comedy, *Something in the Air*. Intimate revue had fallen on evil days, but the West End can now boast one of the best ever in *Sweet and Low* at the Ambassadors.

Last but not least on the musical side, 1943 has given us another mammoth Ivor Novello production, *Arc de Triomphe*, which has brought Mary Ellis back to the West End in a lovely show that will run for years.

WE have had our quota of American comedy hits, but as long as they maintain the high standard of Firth Shephard's productions of *Junior Miss* and *My Sister Eileen* we are well content. We should like to include that most incredible American hit of all time, *Arsenic and Old Lace* in the year's review, but find it was produced on Christmas Eve, 1942. Incidentally Firth Shephard has some brand new plays in storage for this year, following the success of *Halfway to Heaven* at the Princes, in which Bobby Howes and Sydney Howard have the parts of their lives. The American musical, *Panama Hattie*, with its lively Cole Porter tunes, has stood the test of transfer remarkably well, and a special word must go to *This is the Army*, the all-American soldier show, mentioned before, which was undoubtedly one of the big hits of the year in London.

A word for some of the distinguished failures of 1943. *Shadow and Substance*, *The Wingless Victory*, *War and Peace* and *The Dark River*, deserved a better fate.

Finally we cannot leave our review of 1943 without our tribute to the most welcome visitors of the year—the Lunts. All London is flocking to the Aldwych to pay homage to America's great stars. If for nothing else we would have remembered 1943 for this renewed privilege of seeing some of the greatest acting on the English-speaking stage.

F.S.

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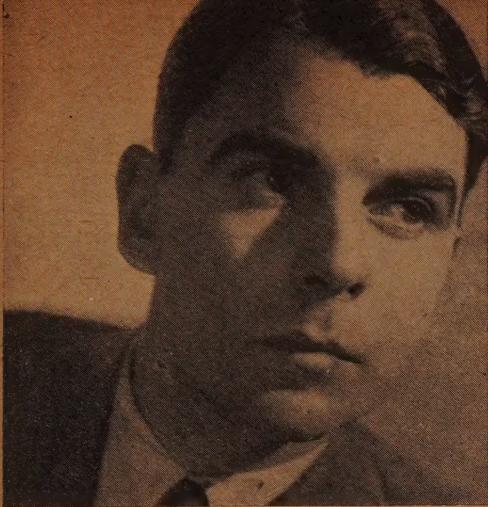
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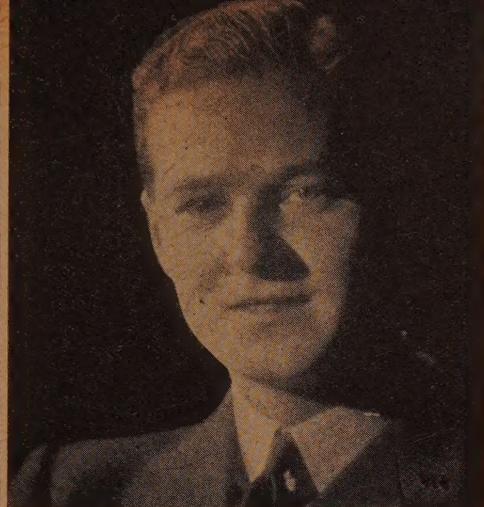
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“Cosmetics of the Stars”



John Vickers.



A. V. Swaebe.

EMLYN WILLIAMS and TERENCE RATTIGAN are in the news. Mr. Williams's two new plays will come to the West End later on and now that *While the Sun Shines* has opened at the Globe, Terence Rattigan has the unique experience of two of his plays running cheek by jowl in Shaftesbury Avenue. Flight-Lieutenant Rattigan has been in the R.A.F. for three years and wrote *Flare Path* in his spare moments while serving in flying boats in West Africa, and *While the Sun Shines* on his recent leaves.

New Shows of the Month

"This Time It's Love"

THIS is the first time this play has been seen in the West End and though light-hearted entertainment, the piece has undoubtedly lost much in the translation, a common enough occurrence in adaptations from the French.

Ellen Pollock gives a charming performance as the prospective bride who might have lost her bridegroom but for the intervention of her doctor son, and Ernest Thesiger and Beryl Mason give able support in less prominent roles. However, the story itself is extremely insubstantial and probably requires the touch of an Alice Delysia or Yvonne Arnaud to achieve its maximum effect.

Charles Heslop, the bridegroom who dallies in Paris with a light o' love when he should have been at the Registry Office, brings considerable skill to bear on what is a rather ill-defined part.

"*This Time It's Love*"—Comedy, Nov. 24th.

"*Good Night, Ladies!*"—Whitehall, Dec. 7th.

"*Halfway to Heaven*"—Princes, Dec. 8th.

"*On Life's Sunny Side*"—Arts, Dec. 9th.

"*There Shall be No Night*"—Aldwych, Dec. 15th.

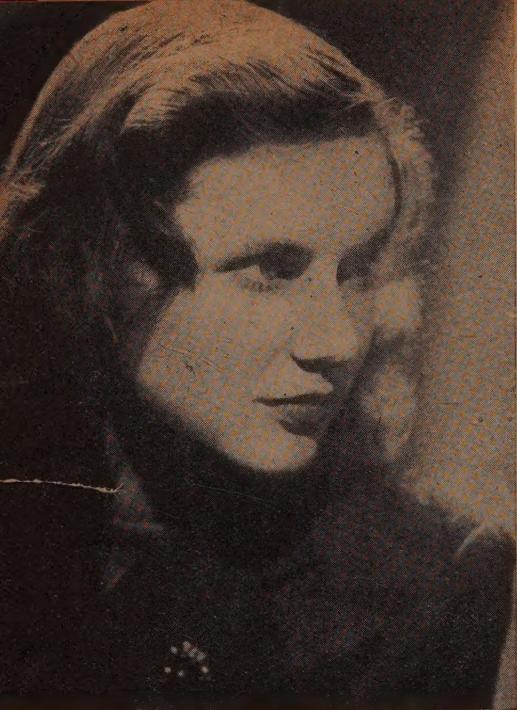
ELLEN
POLLOCK

one of our most accomplished younger actresses who is appearing as Florence Beaudouin in Leslie Julian Jones and James Laval's witty adaptation of the Lois Verneuil play *Le Mariage de Maman*.



The airy business that takes place in the little town near Paris has nevertheless the merit of being as far removed from present unpleasant realities as one could wish. The audience thought so too, judging by the peals of laughter which greeted the more witty passages of dialogue, particularly in the first and third acts. Frank Cellier has produced the play ably, and the décor, with its sunny view through French windows, is particularly attractive.

F.S.

A black and white portrait of actress Muriel Pavlow. She has dark, wavy hair and is looking slightly to her left with a gentle smile.

Left: MURIEL PAVLOW

who is appearing with the Lunts in Robert E. Sherwood's *There Shall be no Night* at the Aldwych. Miss Pavlow, who made her first big hit in Dodie Smith's *Dear Octopus* will be remembered also for her delightful performances in the Gielgud revival of *Dear Brutus* and in *Old Acquaintance*.

Portrait by John Vickers.

"Halfway to Heaven"

WHEN, by the mistake of a heavenly messenger, Joe Pendleton, featherweight boxer aiming at the championship, finds himself summoned to the presence of Mr. Jordan for entry to celestial rewards some fifty years before his allotted time, it is quite certain that complications will arise. They do. The problem is—how to restore Joe to an earthly form after his manager, Sam, has too expeditiously cremated his body?

Mr. Jordan suggests the body of a millionaire banker, just then conveniently murdered by his wife and secretary. Joe accepts, very unwillingly, and he returns to earth to confound the wealthy menage and, more important for our enjoyment, to bewilder and bedevil Sam. It needs only the presence of Betty, beauty in distress from the wicked millionaire's financial knavery, and Joe's renewed life on earth is a mixture of pugilism and romance, with Mr. Jordan and Sam as guides and counsellors of very different calibre.

Once Sam and Mr. Jordan have taken their places by Joe's side, one visibly of the earth, the other invisibly celestial in his aloofness, the rest of a complicated story matters little. For Sam is Sydney Howard, Joe is Bobby Howes, and Mr. Jordan is J. H. Roberts. Entertainment could be in no better hands. There is rich comedy in such moments as Sam facing the realisation that it is really Joe who inhabits the millionaire's body; that Mr. Jordan is real and visible to Joe while being invisible to others. Sam's progress from incredibility to familiarity with Mr. Jordan gives Sydney Howard the best of chances to amuse, and he does not fail. Whether many audiences will make their contribution of co-operating with the author's request to accept some characters as invisible to others remains to be seen. It is worth the little effort, for if it is all great nonsense, yet it is happy and cheerful nonsense.

F.J.D.

A black and white portrait of actress Gladys Henson. She has short, dark, curly hair and is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

Left: GLADYS HENSON

has scored a big success in *The Druid's Rest*, Emlyn Williams's new Welsh comedy, which opened some weeks ago in the provinces prior to its London presentation.

(Right) :

CAROLE LYNNE

is a lovely Cinderella in this year's version at His Majesty's. Miss Lynne recently appeared with great success in Richard Tauber's *Old Chelsea*, and will be remembered for some delightful performances in West End intimate revue.

Portrait by Alexander Bender.

"On Life's Sunny Side"

THE Arts Theatre Company has struck out with this production of a play by Helge Krog, notable Norwegian playwright, whose work is, however, unknown over here. The experiment was interesting, and the company, who made such a brilliant success of Farquhar's "The Recruiting Officer," tackle this very different subject with skill and insight. Newcomer to the company is Mary Morris, one of our most intelligent young actresses, seen all too rarely in the West End, who rises magnificently to the part of Esther Riibe, a young lady who was determined to get on life's sunny side by marrying for money. Esther's husband, played by David Bird, is a wealthy gentleman-farmer, but his household is dominated by his mother, Lady Margaret (Dorothy Reynolds), and the young wife finds disillusionment instead of worldly satisfaction and contentment. Miss Morris's big scene is in the last act, which is the best of the play. Other incidents in the story are in the nature of side issues, but there is able support from Helen Cherry



(who was the delightful Sylvia in *The Recruiting Officer*), Michael Raghlan, Elwyn Brook-Jones and Trevor Howard (who scored big successes as Sergeant Kite and Captain Plume in the Farquhar comedy).

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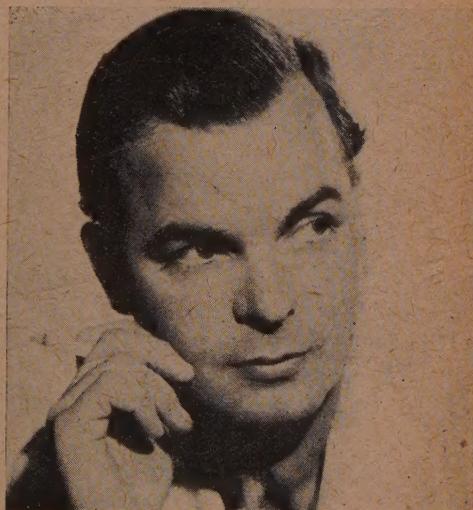
(Below) :

MICHAEL WILDING who is starring in Terence Rattigan's new comedy *While the Sun Shines* with Jane Baxter and Ronald Squire.



(Below) :

HUGH McDERMOTT is also appearing in *While the Sun Shines* which opened at the Globe on December 24th, too late for review this month.



The next production at the Arts will be Granville Barker's translation of Quintero's *Don Abel Wrote a Tragedy*, which opens on January 13th.

F.S.

"There Shall be No Night"

A PRECIOUS stone is valued not only on its intrinsic beauty, but on its rarity, and the very infrequency of the appearances of the Lunts in England adds to the value of these delightful artists. Their brilliance, too, like a jewel, has many facets. At their last appearance, in *Amphytrion* 38, they had a diamond-like iridescence in which wit, sophistication and innuendo were lightly blended with Greek classical poise. These two took the stage as if it were Olympus, but under that incredible polish, rehearsed to the last flicker of an eyelid, one felt, especially in Lynn Fontanne, a tenderness not god-like, but human. This pulsating sincerity is apparent in the present play not only in Lynn Fontanne, but also, magnificently, in Alfred Lunt. The flawless technique is still there, a solid foundation of hard work too many modern players lack, and which gives to these two their perfection of ease and style; but the technique is backed by genuine passion. This war tragedy of a Greek scientist and his American wife therefore becomes etched with an unbearable poignancy; in the woman's nervous hands and white face, with its flicker of suppressed pain, in the man's suddenly aged, crumpled gait after the departure of his son to fight, and the curve of his back on which, although he sits with his face hidden from the audience, suffering is indelibly stamped. The actor's power of suggestion is, in fact, such that when he finally turns his head his eyes seem red with weeping. This is tragic acting achieved with rare simplicity; if these players once let out the stops one feels they would blast the theatre.

This is not, however, a play for letting out the stops, its tragedy being domestic in scale, though with a sense of greater issues involved. Its original setting was Finland, and the change to Greece necessitated by the pressure of world events has not been achieved without a slight awkwardness, though it has enabled its Periclean message of the freedom and dignity of man to be driven home with, probably, more significance. The scientist and Nobel prize-winner, proceeding to the Pericles view through pacifism and a bitter sense of the mental degeneration of man, and dying finally with a gun instead of a hypodermic syringe in his hand, echoes the mental process of many in our time, and the play's closing picture of his wife, bereaved of husband and son and waiting quietly, with a loaded gun at her side, for the invading Germans, has in it the essence of the modern tragedy of small nations. Robert Sher-

wood's writing is sometimes nobly worthy of his theme, and sometimes unfortunately descends to bathos (would any young man of to-day, proposing marriage to a modern young woman with the words "I'll be your man, you'll be my woman," avoid a sock on the jaw by way of reply?). The play is obviously sincere and, though lacking climax, technically efficient. It is not wholly worthy of its two chief protagonists, but what modern play is? It was, perhaps, inevitable that the remainder of the cast should be overshadowed by personalities as electric as those of the Lunts, especially under war-time conditions of casting, but Gerard Kempinski excellently gives to the German diplomat a machine-gun rattle of suave, cold reason.

A.W.

CHRISTMAS SHOWS

"Humpty-Dumpty" (*Coliseum*)

Emile Little's pantomime opened on December 23rd with Pat Kirkwood as principal boy (Prince Rupert of Truly Rural), Norma Dawn as principal girl (Princess Marigold), and Nervo and Knox, Naughton and Gold and Hal Bryan as respectively Cecilia Softspot, King Yolk of Eggville, Count Nine, Count Ninety and Simple Simon. Fourteen lavish scenes, a Snowland Ballet with the Ganjon Brothers and Juanita, and strong supporting cast are other big attractions.

"Cinderella" (*His Majesty's*)

Jack Hylton's pantomime at His Majesty's this year is the ever-green favourite with Evelyn Laye as the Prince and Carole Lynne as Cinderella. George Moon appears as Buttons, and Burton Brown as the Baron. Syd Plumber is one of the Ugly Sisters.

"Peter Pan" (*Cambridge*)

Twenty-year-old Glynis Johns is Peter in this year's production, presented by Jack Hylton, and Diana Deare, who played opposite Jean Forbes-Robertson's Peter before the war, is Wendy. Baliol Holloway is a fearsome Captain Hook in this season's production of the most popular of children's plays, and also takes the part of Mr. Darling with Cicely Byrne as Mrs. Darling.

"Alice in Wonderland" (*Scala*)

Tom Arnold and Ivor Novello are presenting this charming Clemence Dane stage version of *Alice in Wonderland* with a strong cast headed by Roma Beaumont as Alice, Dame Sybil Thorndike as the White Queen and Zena Dare as the Red Queen.

"Where the Rainbow Ends" (*Winter Garden*)

It is two years since this delightful patriotic fairy tale has been seen in the West End, and this year Miss Italia Conti herself is appearing as Mrs. Carey. The play is celebrating its thirty-third year of successful existence.

(it):

K HULBERT
Jack Pendleton,
ALD SHINER
Sergeant Aus-
and CICELY
RTNE I D G E
Terry Potter.

SCENES
at FRONT
TER STUDY
BY
NBRIDGE-
EDGWICK.



Despite their disguise as an elderly Edwardian couple, Jack Pendleton and Terry Potter, of the R.A.F. and W.A.A.F. respectively, who have overstayed their leave, are tracked down by Sergeant Austin. Terry solves the problem by hitting the sergeant over the head with a vase.

"*Something in the Air*" AT THE PALACE

THE West End is never quite such a cheery place without a Hulbert-Hurneidge show, and *Something in the Air*, their new Musical Comedy at the Palace, is another characteristic production with the stars at the top of their form. This time they have gone all war-minded and appear with hilarious results as members of the forces engaged in hot pursuit of a spy;

themselves pursued by a conscientious sergeant.

The music by Manning Sherwin and book by Arthur Macrae, Archie Menzies and Jack Hulbert provide a sparkling background for the inimitable stage partners! The show is presented by Tom Arnold and Lee Ephraim in association with Emile Littler, and Mr. Hulbert produces.



Jack Pendleton's engagement to Terry is broken off because of his philandering with his secretary and the arrival of an old flame. Nothing daunted, he takes refuge in song. A lively scene in Jack Pendleton's house at Ascot in 1939, showing the charming ladies of the chorus.

It is now 1943. Jack's house has been taken over by the R.A.F., and Jack and Terry, now in uniform, find themselves in the old familiar surroundings where they are ordered to do a spot of clearing up. The aggressive Sergeant Austin is somewhat smitten with the charms of Terry and says, "I could go for you." But he gets a poor response.



Terry finds herself detailed for service at Jack's house, but her attempts at sandwich-making do not please Freddie, an officer. No one, of course, suspects that Jack and Terry have ever been in this house before, and many funny situations develop.

(Geoffrey Wardwell as Freddie.)



Another scene in which Jack and Terry make a very poor show as handyman and waitress. Sergeant Austin takes them to task, showing particular concern for the valuable carpet which he says they are spoiling.





The screamingly funny scene in which Terry endeavours to keep pace with the instructions given by the B.B.C. announcer in "Early Morning Exercises." Miss Courtnedge's contortions have to be seen to be believed.



Three charming members of the chorus, (left to right), Peggy Watson, Sabina Gordon and Eunice Crowther in the clever and original parlourmaids' dance.



In their efforts to unravel the spy plot, Jack and Terry visit Hector Critchley's flat in London, heavily disguised. They are here seen showing the young idea how they danced in Edwardian days.

Roberta Chase (Jean Gillie), Jack's pretty secretary, has succeeded in getting rid of his old flame and in a moment of gratitude Jack embraces her. Unfortunately Terry sees this touching episode.

Another funny scene which demonstrates with almost painful reality the joys of first-class railway travel in war-time. Jack and Terry in hot pursuit of the spy find themselves jammed in the corridor and are confronted by the ubiquitous sergeant. However, a little ingenuity and the help of the ticket collector rids them once more of his unwelcome attentions.





Their adventures are still not over when Jack and Terry find themselves in yet another disguise as a Cockney couple involved at a home front and kitchen front mass demonstration. On their right is Sergeant Austin, who has his suspicions.



Party Piece

by

Eric Johns

I WAS celebrating with Griffith Jones. He was out of the Army for a few weeks to play the Earl of Salisbury in Laurence Olivier's colour film version of *Henry V*, which might well make English screen history. The switch-over from battle dress to "civvies" seemed to us an occasion for going gay.

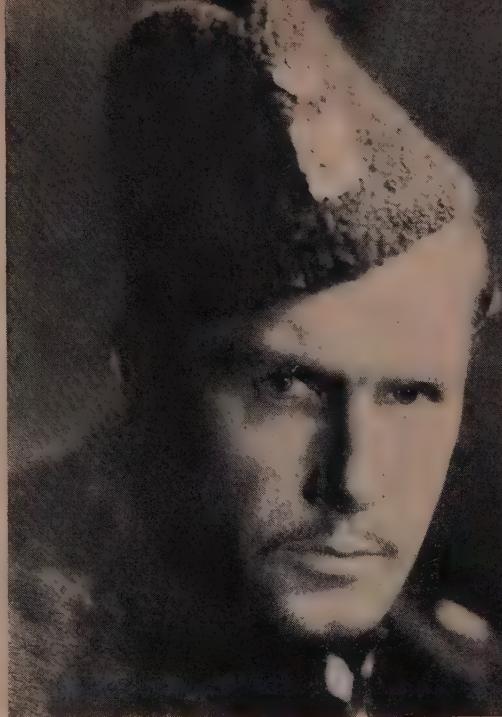
We found ourselves, in a West-End restaurant, crowded enough and noisy enough to be mistaken for a Temple to the Goddess of Swing. Our table was so close to the High Priests of Harmony that we could have eaten off the drum, and each cacophonous prodding of the trombone meant "one in the neck" for Griff. Withdrawing discreetly according to plan to a more favourable position we selected as many dishes as the Minister of Food sanctioned and prepared to embark upon a sea of gossip devoted to theatrical "shop."

At that moment a somewhat unsteady reveller mounted the Rhythm Rostrum, and winking at the "Maestro," chose to seize the microphone and flood the ether with a vibrating version of "When the lights go on again—all over the world." Conversation became rather difficult, but determined not to be beaten, I shouted across the table to Griff, "I wonder what you would most like to see when the lights go on again?"

"Neon signs!" smiled Griff, after a little reflection. "I'd like to see *Party Piece* sweeping in letters of fire across the facade of a suitable West-End theatre, and I'd like to see that same sign still glowing there two or three years afterwards.

"Actors like myself who have joined the Forces and have luckily got into Concert Party have had the opportunity of playing roles totally dissimilar from those previously associated with us, and many have achieved astonishing success. At last we have felt our wings and confirmed to ourselves and our audiences that we are capable of much more than the mere exploitation of personality. The general public should see some of these performances, and a revue that was devised on *Party Piece* lines would enable artists to reveal unsuspected avenues of their talents.

"In pre-war years only repertory patrons saw artists 'act' in the true sense of the word. Acting in the West-End was generally stifled by type-casting. An actor who made



GRIFFITH JONES as he appeared in the film *The Day Will Dawn*, showing how an actor's appearance can be transformed with a minimum of make-up.

a hit in a particular type of part was condemned to specialise, and play that same type with slight variations for the rest of his days; audiences had come to expect it of him, and managers never visualised him as any other character. He was labelled, and producers feared to entrust him with a different role in case he failed to acquit himself so effectively in pastures new.

"The actor loathes type-casting. To him acting means 'going all out' and 'being different,' and he is only too anxious to seize any opportunity to escape from the stereotype and thereby prove that the true art of acting transcends a mere aptitude to express personality. 'Being different,' incidentally, does not mean covering the face with crepe hair and wearing an octogenarian wig; a real actor can completely transform his appearance with the minimum of make-up and wardrobe accessories.

"*Party Piece* would provide a long wanted vehicle for that versatility inherent in any actor worthy of the name, for it would cover the widest field from lowest comedy to highest tragedy and there would be a place in the bill for every artist to realise his secret ambition.

"After years of touring as a music hall act with her sister Billie, Renee Houston proved in *Love Laughs* that apart from being able to carry an entire musical show

on her gallant little shoulders she could take a serious scene in her stride just as easily as a wisecrack with the conductor. Gerald du Maurier scored one of his most memorable successes as 'Captain Hook,' a classic broad comedy villain; and he gave Gracie Fields the chance to display her powers as a tragedienne when he engaged her to play in S.O.S. But so few stars get these golden opportunities.

"In *Party Piece* you would see the comedian vary a fruity Coster song with a little cameo of stark tragedy—as Chaplin varies pantomime and pathos in his films. You might hear John Gielgud singing a Brahms love song; see Isabel Jeans dancing a Strauss waltz; Vivien Leigh playing the violin; or Jack Buchanan astounding us in a juggling act. No one can accuse me of building fatuous castles in the air, for we have already heard Yvonne Arnaud playing a piano concerto under the baton of distinguished conductors; we have seen Lopokova desert the ballet to play 'Olivia' in *Twelfth Night*, and Robert Helpmann is likewise forsaking his ballet shoes to play 'Hamlet.' Let it also be remembered that Adele Dixon, now a musical comedy heroine, was once Gielgud's leading lady at the Old Vic, where she played 'Ophelia' to his 'Hamlet,' and apart from singing Puccini at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, Mary Ellis has played 'Katherine' in a Broadway modern dress version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. George Robey, the music hall's Prime Minister of Mirth, scored one of his memorable triumphs as 'Falstaff.'

"The best performances I have given to date have been in roles totally unlike myself, such as the downtrodden, sex-ridden waiter in *Gertie Maude* and the smarmy, cocky smart-aleck in *Ladies in Retirement*. These parts have given me more satisfaction than any of the cardboard lovers I had been condemned to play earlier in my career. My biggest hit in Concert Party has been as a NAAFI Manageress singing 'Be Like a Kettle and Sing'—followed in the same bill by *Dalgarni*, my own deadly serious sketch of a reporter who is murdered by a vampire medium, previously denounced by him as a fake. If I ever had the opportunity of joining the cast of *Party Piece* I would certainly want to sing 'Any Old Iron,' which I have been 'putting over' at Camp Shows with great gusto for the past year.

"Most actors have delightful tricks up their sleeves and *Party Piece* would enable the public to become familiar with them and bring intense satisfaction to both sides of the footlights. When the Clown wants to play 'Hamlet' one can understand the Manager shaking his head, since if he turns out to be a flop as a tragedian the Manager loses several thousand pounds by the experiment; but the Clown could be permitted to try his hand at tragedy in a revue sketch, for even if he failed it would not jeopardise the entire show. The particular item could easily and quickly be replaced by more suitable material. The whole show cannot fail because one artist is miscast for ten minutes."

"I suggest also that *Party Piece* should be a more or less permanent revue, always associated with the same theatre just as *Revudeville* is always housed at the Windmill. Stars would join the cast for a season of a month or six weeks and then be replaced by other famous names in new editions of the show. It would be an ideal fill-in for artists at a loose end between the termination of one engagement and the commencement of rehearsals for another, and famous foreign stars visiting London for a few weeks might be induced to join the cast for a short season to give us a taste of the magic that has endeared them to New York, Madrid, or Buenos Aires.

"Under Michel St. Denis the Compagnie des Quinze was run on similar lines with the players being cast in the most diversified roles, and the leading lady of one production playing a ten-line part in the next. Such versatility was hailed as a theatrical miracle, so why not revive such a policy in a *Party Piece* revue to provide a shop window for that wealth of hidden talent possessed by our established stars—to say nothing of undiscovered geniuses whose names still remain to be made?"

The Swing Orgy was at its height as we paid the bill and made for the door. The rollicking reveller had again elbowed the "Maestro" aside, and was going into action with "Wishing." Griff paused on the threshold as the inebriated one wailed about "If you wish long enough—wish strong enough—you will come to know—wishing will make it so."

"Maybe this is a good omen," he smiled over his shoulder. "What's wrong with a little wishful thinking... anyway?"

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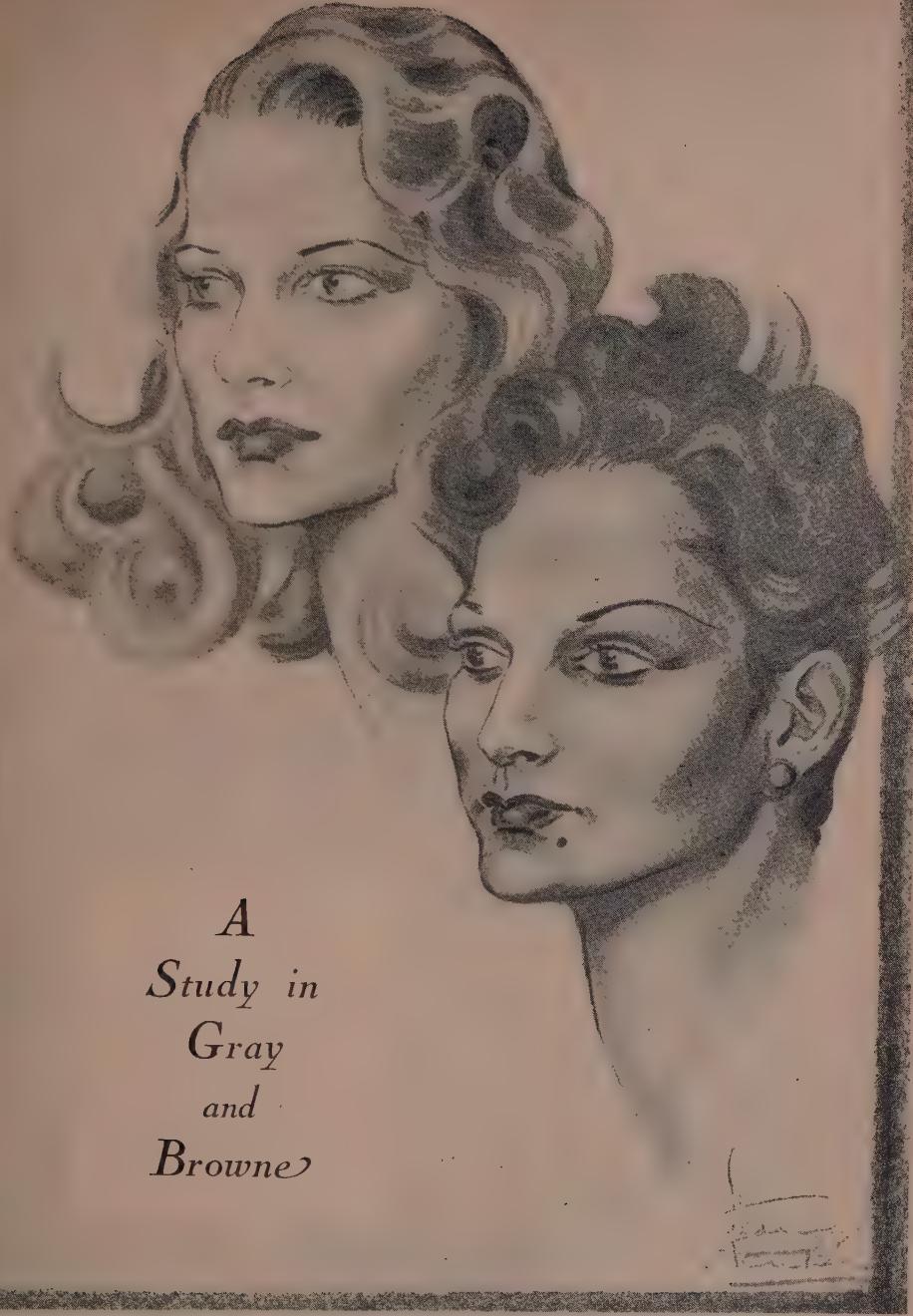
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● Stanley Parker returns to *Theatre World* with a dashing exposition of the feminine stars of Firth Shephard's *My Sister Eileen*, which, welding together two conflicting temperaments into one harmonious whole, reveals him in his most characteristic mood, at the top of his brilliant form—a Virtuoso in Chiaroscuro.

Theatregoing in Moscow

SIDELIGHT ON CURRENT PRODUCTIONS

by Nikolai Volkov

THE evening performances in Moscow's theatres begin at 7 sharp. At that hour the doors are closed and thousands of people turn their eyes upon the stage.

A glance at the advertisements will reveal the variety and interest of the third Moscow war-time season. The Bolshoi Theatre, pride of Moscow, is to-day giving Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Snow Maiden*, a wonderful fairy tale based on the play by the great Russian playwright, Ostrovsky. From the orchestra pit rise the crystal clear melodies like bubbling brooks in spring, and from far-away lands to the kingdom of snow and ice comes the beautiful spring, while ardent love fills the heart of the Snow Maiden.

On the Sverdlovsk Square, next to the Bolshoi Theatre, stands the country's oldest playhouse—The Maly. There nineteenth century stage realism grew and developed, there Gogol's *Inspector General*, Griboedov's *Wit from Woe* and Ostrovsky's comedies were first performed. The play now running at the Maly Theatre is Leonid Leonov's *Invasion*, which relates the tragic story of a Russian town in the grip of the "Gestapo dragons," so courageously resisted by the Soviet people.

The world famous Moscow Art Theatre is also performing the work of a contemporary playwright—Constantine Simonov's *Russian People*. This theatre, of course, was founded by Constantine Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko and recently celebrated its 45th anniversary.

The companies of each one of these three theatres perform in two buildings, Rossini's *Barber of Seville* is being given at the Bolshoi Theatre's second house, Scribe's comedy *A Glass of Water* at the Maly Theatre branch, and Gorky's masterpiece *The Lower Depths* at the Art Theatre.

Another of Gorky's plays, *The Philistines*, is being acted in the Central Red Army Theatre, one of the biggest in the capital. Shaped like an enormous five-pointed star this famous theatre is located on Commune Square. Drama may be seen at several other theatres. Simonov's *Wait for Me*, dealing with love and faithfulness in wartime, is the attraction at the Moscow Drama Theatre on Hertzen Street, not far from the Moscow University. The Lenin Komsomol Theatre is giving a play by the gifted war correspondent Boris Gorbatov, entitled *The Youth of our Fathers*. Its action takes place a quarter of a century ago.

Those who are not afraid of a long tram-

car ride find it worth while to see one of the most charming productions staged by the younger generation of Moscow's actors. It is Sheridan's *Duenna*, brilliantly played by the Stanislavsky Stage School. These younger actors are at present performing in the small Lenin Theatre on Krasnaya Presnya. They are not afraid of narrow stages, however, for their sets and properties can be packed into a few trunks.

Lovers of musicals can see the classical *Daughter of Madame Angot* at the Stanislavsky-Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre, or a new Soviet musical comedy *The Girl from Barcelona* at the Moscow Operetta Theatre. *The Daughter of Madame Angot* is an outstanding production for the stage by the late Nemirovich-Danchenko himself. *The Girl from Barcelona*, on the other hand, deals with present day events. It has a melodious score by Boris Alexandrov.

There are, in addition, other theatres and concert halls open in Moscow. *Nothing Suggestive*, a new musical revue, is the attraction at the Miniature Theatre, while the Circus announces a big programme with *The Circle of Courage* as the feature attraction. In the Conservatoire Hall, Nikolai Goloanov is conducting a concert of Rachmaninov, Debussy and Saint Saens. The magnificent Tchaikovsky Hall features the Folk Dance Ensemble under Igor Moiseev. In the Hall of Columns of the House of Trade Unions, Leonid Utesov's jazz orchestra is performing a new programme entitled *Strike at the Enemy*.

The hand nears 11 o'clock, the curtains in the theatres are lowered on the final act. Thousands of people file out and tramcars, trolley buses, trains and underground take them to all parts of Moscow, as another war-time night descends.

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(Right):

BBE DANIELS

as

Hattie Maloney.

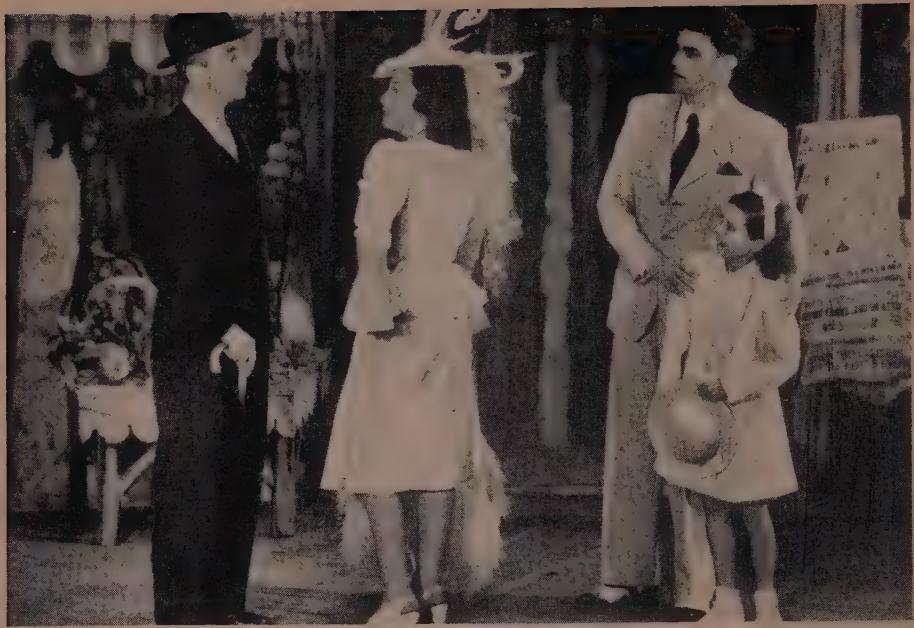
"Panama Hattie"

AT
THE
PICCADILLY

Scenes from the musical success at the Piccadilly which, with its delightful Cole Porter song hits and clever book by Herbert Fields and B. G. de Sylva, not forgetting William Mollison's lavish production, is a most lively piece of entertainment. Presented by Tom Arnold and Lee Ephraim in association with Emile Littler, *Panama Hattie* has a clever team of stars led by Bebe Daniels.

PICTURES BY
BERT WILSON
MANCHESTER





Hattie puts on all her finery to meet her fiance and his daughter, but little Elizabeth laughs at her over-elaborate dress and hat. (L-R) Claude Hulbert as Vivian Budd, Nick's English butler, Ivan Brandt as Nick Bullett, Hattie's fiance, and Betty Blacker as Elizabeth.



Hattie, estranged from Nick, seeks to drown her sorrows in the Bar of the Tropical Shore, while Lou Smith (Richard Hearne), one of the sailors from the S.S. Victory visiting Panama City, has obviously been celebrating none too wisely.



Loopy Smith shows Vivian ("We are not amused") Budd how to win every time at the fruit machine. But it doesn't work out for Budd. (Below) : One of the duties of the English butler is to keep Elizabeth amused and instructed at Nick's cottage in the Canal zone. (Right) : Nick tells his little girl that she must be kind to Hattie. In the foreground is Ben Hur, Hattie's dog, most gracefully played by Queenie.





Later on Hattie and Elizabeth are reconciled and sing together that popular song "Let's be Buddies." Very tactfully the little girl tells her new-found friend she is somewhat over-dressed, and gently removing some of her bows and furbelows, demonstrates how much nicer a lady can look unadorned. When Hattie arrives at Admiral Tree's reception (left), she has obviously taken Elizabeth's good advice.



The hilarious scene in which Bebe Daniels surprises her thousands of fans by doing a real adagio dance with Eddy Brown (Max Wall), Loopy Smith, and Joe Briggs (Jack Stanford), assisted by Vivian Budd. The three crazy sailors are incidentally busy tracking down a fifth column plot to blow up the Canal power house.

Eddy Brown and Florrie (Frances Marsden), Hattie's vivacious friend, will have their little joke, but Mr. Budd refuses to be ruffled.



The scene in which Hattie enrages Nick's boss by making him have a fit of hay fever at the microphone after presenting him with a silver cup containing golden rod, to which he is allergic. This, however, was the work of the villainess of the piece, Leila Tree (Georgia Mackinnon, right), who is determined to marry Nick.



(Below) : One of the many colourful scenes of singing, dancing and lovely girls.





Another scene on Fiesta night on the Santa-Ana Plaza, showing Speciality Dancer Diane Gardiner, with the chorus.



(Left) : Nick, who is in charge of the locks of the Panama Canal, with Loopy and Elizabeth, watches a big vessel laden with munitions from the control room window. The little girl has innocently brought in a mysterious parcel which contains a time bomb, but at the last moment Hattie, who has heard of the plot, rushes in, removes the bomb and saves the situation.



All ends happily for Nick, Hattie and Elizabeth, not to mention the crazy three (left), who get very rapid promotion as a reward for their part in the thrilling adventure.

Ninette de Valois' "Promenade"

by

Audrey Williamson

THE new Sadler's Wells Ballet season at the New has been marked by feverish activity in the form of dancers departing with, and returning without, influenza, understudies stepping into breaches, and same variations in the published programme of ballets. The victims have also included Constant Lambert and, apparently, the first oboe, the sufferings of this unhappy instrument during the second performance of *The Rake's Progress* being pitiable to listen to. As a result, the première of Ninette de Valois' new ballet, *Promenade*, was notable for the unusual event of the company's prima ballerina, Margot Fonteyn, appearing as understudy at short notice for a younger dancer, Beryl Grey, in addition to several other changes of cast.

It says much for the progressive development and resilience of this company that Miss de Valois' ballet, which at the time of writing has still to be seen with its intended cast, has given a first impression of such refreshing charm and finish. Its most distinctive elements are spontaneity and "style," the last an elusive quality that informs the work only of the practised choreographer, and can give to a small light work of this nature an elegance that does not fade when the first novelty is past. In one other sense *Promenade* is a pattern of *divertissement* ballet construction; it has the connecting link between the dances, and the sustained atmosphere, that distinguish true choreography from the mere arrangement of dances, and make even so slight a work a ballet complete and coherent in itself.

The scene of the ballet is a park, decoratively realised in Hugh Stevenson's stylised setting, its trees bending with naked beauty of line in autumnal green and burnt sienna, and the costumes adding the silken glow of the French Empire. The connecting link is an ancient little lepidopterist, who pursues his butterflies or shuffles book-engrossed across the stage in happy oblivion; his exits and entrances have the humour of the unexpected, suddenly turning a *pas de trois* into a *pas de quatre* and relieving the *longeurs* of the least inventive dance in the ballet, which even Julia Farron's gloved and lace-veiled daintiness cannot make interesting. The lepidopterist's sudden flying entrance into this group has the surprise value of a chord in the No. 94 Symphony in G, and the part is played with benevolent abstraction by Gordon Hamilton. This is a delightful performance ranking with the same dancer's wizened little impresario in *The Prospect Before Us*, a modest small portrait that never steps out of the balletic



PAMELA MAY

Anthony.

frame yet manages to be something more than a "stooge." Miss de Valois' other dances have piquancy and a gay reflection of Haydn's dancing rhythms, from the crocodile of pertly bonnetted schoolgirls, inadequately controlled by a dragonsome governess, to the elaborate figurations of the final Breton folk dance, in which Miss de Valois had the assistance of Lieut. de Cadenet, of the Fighting French Air Force, and which brings the ballet to a spirited and breathless conclusion. The *pas de deux*, danced on the first night by Margot Fonteyn and a strikingly handsome David Paltenghi, contains some grave, swinging "lifts" and a charming use of *battements cloches*, and its faint, bitter-sweet nostalgia of farewell was echoed in Margot Fonteyn's performance, which had something of the autumnal wistfulness of her forsaken Flower Girl in *Nocturne*. Moira Shearer has since danced the part with shining grace and a copper-haired, Dresden china beauty, but her sadness is too delicately painted, as yet, to move as well as charm. Her crystalline precision and vivacity have at other performances added sparkle to the *pas de trois*, written for herself, Alexis Rassine and Ray Powell, and having wit as well as originality in its combination of one character and two classical dancers. Anne Lascelles, a pretty and improving little dancer, gives a softer, more rounded coquetry to the girl's part in this dance, which with the exception

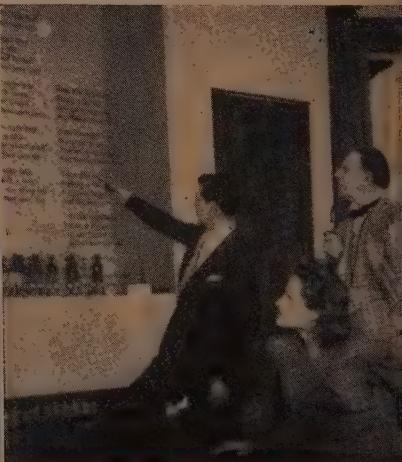
(Continued on page 32)



TEN oddly assorted characters all strangers to each other, themselves thrown together in a house on Nigger Island off the coast of Devon as the result of an intriguing invitation from a mysterious Mr. Owen. (Left): The initial moment during their first evening when a strange voice, afterwards discovered to have come from a gramophone record, gives chapter and verse of the various "crimes" the guests were alleged to have committed and of which, indeed, all of them save two have been more or less guilty. (Left to right): Percy Williams as William Blore, ex-policeman; Gwyn Nicholls as Dr. Armstrong, famous neurologist; Michael Balfour as Anthony Marsten, speed fiend; Eric Cowley as General Macken, late of the regular army; Linda Travers as Vera Claythorne, who has come as the unknown Mr. Owen's secretary; Terence de Marney as Phillip Lombard, man of adventure; Allan Jeayes as Sir Lawrence Wgrave, famous judge; Henry Watson as Emily Brent, very narrow-minded, embittered spinster; William Murray as Rogers, the servant. On the wall are the ten versions of the famous nursery rhyme, ably adapted; and below ten porcelain nigger dolls. (Left): Rogers (Hilda Bruce-Potter) faints at hearing the gramophone record.

"Ten Little Niggers" AT THE ST. JAMES'S

(Below): One by one the guests and Rogers give their version of the alleged crimes under the expert questioning of the Judge, aided and abetted by William Blore, who in their turn have also to justify their actions. By next morning the members of the house party begin to die off in mysterious circumstances.



begins to dawn on the nerve-racked gathering that one of them must be the instigator of this ghoulish practical joke, and as the china dolls also begin to disappear a feeling of panic seizes the company. Philip Lombard, who has apparently spent a lifetime facing danger, organises a thorough search of the house to see if he can find anything which may throw light on the mystery. Meanwhile, Narracot, the boatman, fails to put in his usual appearance from the mainland and when later a heavy gale blows up the guests know they are cut off from all outside help.



Scenes from
- Agatha
Christie's
famous
Thriller

(Below) : The General tells Vera Claymore of the tragic story of his wife's death for his junior officer and how in a fit of jealousy he sent his rival to certain death. Shortly afterwards the unhappy man is found dead on the veranda.



Later that evening two of the party return drenched from the storm after another fruitless effort to find help, and after Rogers had been found done to death by an axe, they are afraid to venture outside the room alone.





Verse number five is borne out
Emily Brent is discovered in her
with a hypodermic syringe at her
("A bumble bee stung one, And
there were five"). Only five
figures remain and the nerves of
remaining guests are strained to
breaking point. To add to their misery
lights go out, and lack of food and
begin to tell their tale. The rest of
verses hinting at the method of
are scanned with a growing sense
of doom: "One got in Chancery, And
there were four"; "A red hen
swallowed one, And then there were
three"; "A big bear hugged one,
then there were two"; "One
frizzled up, And then there was one,
and, finally,

"One little nigger boy,
Left all alone,
He went and hanged himself
And then there were none."

PICTURES BY
JOHN VICKERS.



In the cold light of day only three remain, one of them almost certain to be the murderer. Finally only two are left to glare in horror at each other. But there is more than one version to the well-known rhyme and how it all ends can be discovered at the St. James's Theatre.

Whispers from the Wings

BY
LOOKER ON

SOMETHING new in entertainment is provided by *Winkles and Champagne*, the latest Unity Theatre production, which opened on December 30th. "Winkles and Champagne" is, of course, the title of a book by Willson Disher, that great authority on the theatre of the past, who not only allowed the Unity Theatre company to use the title, but also acted as adviser to the producer.

An immense amount of research has gone to the making of this delightful cavalcade of Music Hall, and there can be no doubt of the authenticity of the production. Most of the songs have been unearthed from the British Museum by Benny Norris, musical director, and Bernard Sarron, who collaborated on the brilliant set for the recent successful Unity Theatre production of *Spanish Village*, is responsible for all set designs, made and constructed in the theatre's workshops.

Sarron was also responsible for the discovery for *Winkles and Champagne* of Henry Fielding's "Burletta," written about 1735 and contained in a collection of plays found in Cornwall which were produced at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, about 1790. The tableau of "Rosherville" is an animated picture against a background of the brilliantly lit gardens of the early 19th century. The "Beer Hall" takes us indoors to any one of the famous Public Houses of the day, with good beer flowing, rousing choruses, a Trade Union meeting in one corner and a piano in the other. The show finishes up under the hammer of the chairman at a Music Hall—is it Collin's?—where the audience doesn't just listen and look, but is cajoled and bullied into joining in.

Mention of Bill Rowbotham as producer reminds me that he is the third Unity player to appear as Conk in *Mr. Bolfry*. Mr. Rowbotham is producing *Winkles and Champagne* in between performances at the Playhouse. The first "Unity" Conk was Harry Ross (now in *My Sister Eileen*) and the second, Alfie Bass (now in the Army).

Mr. Rowbotham is also co-author of the script with Terry Newman, a young statistician, who is a keen writer. The costumes, which are a triumph, have been designed by Doris Levenson and Sarron, after much research.

The work of this little theatre is more than praiseworthy, especially in view of the difficulties of war-time and the fact that the company are "part-time" players with other jobs to do in the day time. We hope

to tell the Unity Theatre's fascinating story in a future issue.

IN the New Year the B.B.C. are to broadcast a series of weekly programmes on "Life and the Theatre." The first of these will be on Friday, January 7th, at 7.30 p.m. in the Home Service, and the series will be continued until March 24th.

These talks will show how the material of good plays, whether tragedy or comedy, must always be the variety and richness of human life; how the playwright's selection and interpretation of his theme is shaped by the society in which he lives, and how his material is worked into the shape it assumes when the curtain goes up and he and his interpreters meet their audience. During the run of the series on alternate Sundays a full-length play will be performed. It is hoped to include among these plays *The Enemy of the People* by Ibsen; Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; *Distant Point* by Afinogenov; *Volpone* by Ben Jonson; and Maeterlinck's *The Blind*. Short scenes from other plays will also be acted in each talk, to illustrate the speaker's point; and the speaker will always keep in mind the full-length play due for performance.

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Prisoner-of-War

This group taken at a German Prisoner-of-War Camp has a special interest for theatre people. Seated second from the right is Lieut. Houston Rogers, R.N.V.R., the well-known West End photographer, who did such excellent work for the stage before the war. Bill Rogers has been a prisoner since 1940. Let's hope it won't be long now before he is taking portraits of the West End stars once again! Others in the picture—in case the names may strike a chord—are L-R: Lieut.

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PHYLLIS DIXEY

star of *Good Night, Ladies!* with which the Whitehall Theatre has returned to non-stop revue, again devised and presented by Alfred Estdale. Other members of the cast are singer Kenneth White, dancers Costello and Marquez and Raymonde Seton and Berangese, André Randall, international humorist, and Edward Cooper, inimitable as usual with his sophisticated songs at the piano. Tumbling, conjuring and juggling add variety to a slick and attractive bill.

AMATEUR STAGE

Notes
and Topics

WHEN Mr. J. B. Priestley's new play for the Army, *Desert Highway*, was produced at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, in December, it was played by a cast of Army men drawn from the Central Pool of Artists organised by the Army Welfare for Troops Entertainment. So professionals played with amateurs. Stephen Murray and John Wyse were the professional leads; the amateurs included W. Emlyn Jones as the Welshman and George Cooper as the Yorkshireman.

While this new play runs true to recent Priestley form, it is worth referring here to his other play, *They Came to a City*, which has just concluded its run at the Globe Theatre. This is a play which should interest the discerning society looking for something away from the ordinary. If and when it is available, *They Came to a City* offers an excellent vehicle for five women

and four men, and a producer able to keep alive a rather static play set outside a strange city. The characterisation is type, but the dramatist's comment on his contemporary world is tart and provocative. The simple setting is an interesting challenge to any amateur stage manager.

* * *

STUDENT Players Dramatic Society, of Regent Street Polytechnic, gave a production of *Poison Pen* at Portland Hall in December. They aim at one show a term, and hold weekly meetings to encourage interest in the theatre. Membership is over one hundred and fifty, and a one-act play competition is held each term.

The Tavern Players, of Bexley, formed last spring, have toured local halls with their recent production, *Other Peoples' Houses*, giving ten separate performances in three months. They have also found a welcome at gun sites and earned a repeat visit to the Royal Artillery Theatre, at Woolwich. They have *Gaslight* and *Spring Meeting* in rehearsal, with bookings for January. Male leads are sometimes a problem, owing to the war, and interested readers may care to write the secretary, Miss D. Hood, 11, Manor Way, Bexley.

Membership of the British Drama League rose from 3,096 to 4,110 last year. Affiliated organisations total 3,297 against 2,274.

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Sadler's Wells Ballet

(Continued from page 25)

of the ballet's one solo is the most ingenious of Miss de Valois' inventions. This solo of a youthful minx, bored and bent on mischief, is a delicious study in *gaminerie* and excellently danced by Pauline Clayden, who brings to the nut-brown little maid a shrugging petulance, cheekiness, and naïve delight at her ephemeral male "capture" that are wholly adorable.

The season has also been notable for an excellent second-night performance of *Coppelia*, which last season seemed technically rather under the weather. Margot Fonteyn has never danced Swanilda with more cleanliness and sparkle of finish, Alexis Rassine now brings to his third act classical dancing a flight-like grace matched only, in this company, by the winged excitement of Robert Helpmann's third act *jétés* in *Swan Lake*, and Helpmann's Dr. Coppélius is a richly embroidered, unforced piece of mimic clowning, an art almost lost to the modern stage and having, in this case, a basis of character observation almost Dickensian. (It is high time Miss de Valois devised a Dickens ballet, after Cruikshank, for this comedian.) The notable event of this *Coppelia*, however, was the return of Pamela May, after her long absence, as Dawn, in which her sun-bright radiance, attack and quickness of footwork, in spite of obvious nervousness, held the stage. The following afternoon she danced the Prelude in *Les Sylphides* and it was interesting to see again an interpretation more vital, less dream-like than of late, but one not the less musical in tempo and rhythm.

The first performance of *Promenade*, flanked by *The Wise Virgins* and *Hamlet*, provided an interesting study of contrasts in the work of the Wells' choreographers. In *The Wise Virgins* Ashton, without attempting any metaphysical or psychological suggestion, has translated the Bach music into a series of dissolving pictures of Renaissance beauty, telling his story with the simplicity of an illustrated fairy tale and most sensitively echoing the composer's

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serene, firm texture in the hand movements of the Bride and the lovely, flexible groupings of the Cherubs. The weakness of this ballet, at the moment, is in its angels, the present dancer's being unable to carry out the choreographer's intentions either in the sustained balanced posing or the "lifts" in the dream sequence, and there is some argument for these parts being choreographically adapted to meet present exigencies. The ballet, though, has a sweeping, uninterrupted fluidity and this is also one of the most striking attributes of Helpmann's *Hamlet*, in which music and story are translated into a fourth-dimensional plané of imagination only ballet, among theatrical arts, can adequately explore. The compression of this ballet is as remarkable as its concentrated and impetuous drama, and if, on his return to ballet after his appearance next February in *Hamlet* the play, Helpmann will only use his gifts to the full and follow up this line of expressionistic choreographic development, some works of great experimental value may enrich and widen the art of ballet. His is too original a choreographic mind to be allowed to rust.

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